

# First State Manufactured Home Owners Eligible For Free Legal Representation Under New Contract

## ***DOJ-CLASI agreement covers most disputes with community owners***

Attorney General Kathy Jennings announced Monday that manufactured home owners in disputes with their community owners will be eligible for free legal representation by the non-profit Delaware Community Legal Aid Society, Inc. (CLASI), under a contract it entered with the Delaware Department of Justice.

*“Constituents in all three counties have called for this kind of resource for years,” said **Attorney General Jennings**. “This is a hard-fought victory for the more than 20,000 home owners in Delaware’s manufactured home communities, many of whom live on fixed incomes and feel trapped by economic circumstance, even when the law is on their side. This agreement makes the system more fair and equal and brings justice within reach for people who simply want a fair deal. I’m excited about this partnership and I’m grateful to everyone in the DOJ, at CLASI, and in the General Assembly who made it possible.”*

*“CLASI’s mission has always been to combat injustice through creative and persistent civil legal advocacy, and with this contract we are advancing that mission,” said **CLASI’s Advocacy Director John S. Whitelaw**. “We are grateful to have been awarded this contract. We provide high-quality representation to our clients – including many vulnerable*

*home owners in manufactured housing communities – each day. We're excited for the chance to expand our services and we're looking forward to working with our new clients"*

*"I strongly supported House Bill 46, and I'm glad to see this contract signed," said **Delaware Manufactured Home Owners Association President Bill Kinnick**. "I've worked closely with CLASI over the years. I know their work and I'm glad to have them on our side. As long as I can remember, the deck has been stacked against manufactured home owners, many of whom are senior citizens or working class and have nowhere to turn when they are mistreated. This contract will finally help level a playing field that has been tilted against us for years."*

The contract is made possible by a dedicated attorney fund established by the General Assembly and funded by a 50-cent portion of an existing monthly assessment paid by manufactured home owners. The contract provides for quality legal representation to home owners in manufactured housing communities while also including the resources necessary for CLASI to expand eligibility and client capacity.

*"For decades, manufactured home owners have found themselves at a significant financial disadvantage in legal conflicts with landowners," said **Rep. John Kowalko**, D-Newark South. "Not being able to afford professional legal assistance often led to an unfair conclusion. The law enabling a 50-cent contribution for legal expenses in the rent payment has resulted in the securing of a contract with Community Legal Aid Society. This will ensure more fairness in outcomes in disputes and level the legal playing field for the home owners."*

*"Multi-billion-dollar corporate entities are increasingly buying up the manufactured housing communities in Delaware and jacking up the ground rent on the land literally beneath*

*the feet of our neighbors, friends and family members, all to turn a profit for shareholders who have never set foot in this state,” said **Sen. Bruce Ennis**, D-Smyrna. “These excessive rent hikes deplete local manufactured-home owners of their limited disposable income and leave them unable to afford proper legal representation. Our legislation simply gives those homeowners a way to pool their resources and level the playing field. Thank you to Attorney General Kathy Jennings and CLASI for working together to give the little guy a fighting chance.”*

The contract specifically covers home owner-community owner disputes in communities governed by the Manufactured Home Owners and Community Owners Act. The DOJ will/does not participate in CLASI’s representation of clients, but will monitor the contract to ensure that the statute’s goals are met.

Eligible home owners seeking representation can find more information at [www.declasi.org](http://www.declasi.org) or call CLASI at:

- New Castle County: (302) 575-0660
- Kent County: (302) 674-8500
- Sussex County: (302) 856-0038

Additional information about manufactured housing is available through the DOJ’s Manufactured Housing Ombudsperson at (302) 577-5035 or [de.gov/mho](http://de.gov/mho).